

# How artist Anuradha Nalapat explores words and the spaces behind them

Through her show NamePlaceAnimalThing, Anuradha Nalapat delves into how creativity keeps us from mental lethargy

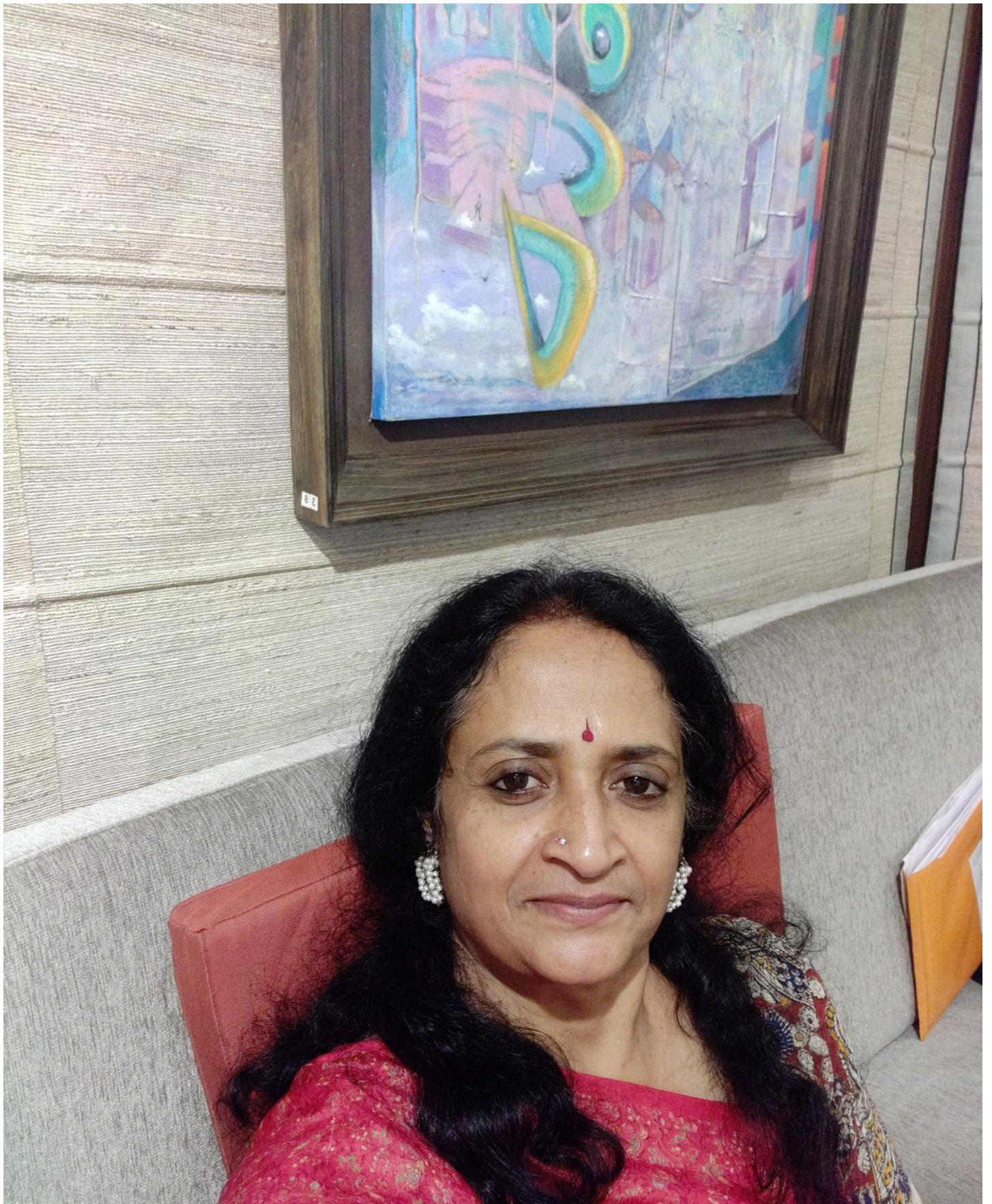
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RUTH DHANARAJ



A work from artist Anuradha Nalapat's series NamePlaceAnimalThing | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

Talking to artist Anuradha Nalapat is a little like stumbling down memory lane, all the while wondering how much of the scenery you had missed the first time round. Childhood distractions take on a different dimension in her artistic approach.



Artist Anuradha Nalapat | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

She talks about the classroom notebook staple — NamePlaceAnimalThing — a simple, game that pitted general knowledge against the random fall of a dice (or number counter). “The simple act of choosing your favourite place or animal got me thinking about the power and multiplicity of names. Different people use variations of your name when addressing you; there is no one single identity that defines you.”

Anuradha says the current exhibition, titled after that game, is a reflection of the multifaceted creativity within every person. “As a artist for over 25 years, I never thought I would be interested in creating a documentary or writing an essay in Malayalam, my mother tongue. But life shows you that you can do that too,” she says.



A work from artist Anuradha Nalapat's series NamePlaceAnimalThing | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

“Just beyond that name is a dramatic space that balances you. You become the spaces you visit. Sometimes they can be traumatic, but you learn so much from them. Everything about art and exploration is about visiting those different spaces.”

Expounding on the inspiration for her current body of work, Anuradha says it stemmed from a long hard look at childhood distractions. “Words can be a trap; you get lost in words. We don’t know why we use certain words over and over again. Nursery rhymes and classics such as *Alice In Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* are really not for children — they are for adults to understand children,” she says, adding, “A child peeping into dark closets is imagery that encourages you to peep into your subconscious.”

And truth be told, Anuradha’s paintings could offer a peek into anyone’s mind, at any given time. Fantastic worlds of vivid hues inhabited by mystic creatures and miniscule people, rise from the mists of her imagination jostling with words in ancient scripts.



“What are words? What do they mean? We have been fed these words and now we are sitting in tight corsets of words woven around us, pushed on a Ferris wheel going in circles without understanding. If you want to understand who you are, you need to pursue that creative energy.”

She continues: “Keep writing or painting or whatever it is you do to cull it out, fish it out of yourself. Art is a tool to express yourself and keep yourself from looming insanity. Art is a part of you — an extension of your being, so it has to be utilised.”

Anuradha goes on to say there are moments when life shows you that your subconscious has it; you have only need to pull it out. “This is a journey of constant growth. I went into a place within, took out things from there and showed it to the world,” she says of the process that has held her in good stead as an artist.

Works from artist Anuradha Nalapat's series NamePlaceAnimalThing | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

She has used acrylics and pastels on acid-free paper as well as oil on canvas and charcoal for the 24 pieces on display for NamePlaceAnimalThing.

Created over the past two years, she says the lockdown was a time 'to build from scratch'. "COVID pushed us into a place where we could go back to your own self and understand your boundaries, but at the same time search your soul. The trauma and tough times in there will help hone yourself to a better you."

NamePlaceAnimalThing will be on display at MKF Gallery till September 24